



SENATOR

**Debbie Regala**

E-Newsletter - 27th District, Tacoma

[Web Site](#) | [Contact me](#) | [About the Legislature](#)

**27th Legislative District**

**April 5, 2010**

Dear Neighbors,

As I write this, we continue to negotiate with the House of Representatives on a final supplemental budget. While we have reached agreement on the size of the budget, it's taking a little longer to agree on the sources of the new revenue needed to close the remaining gap after all our cuts.

The biggest sticking point has been that our plan in the Senate relies on a small increase in the sales tax of two-tenths of a penny, on the theory that the fairest tax plan is one that spreads the smallest tax across the largest number of people. The House, meanwhile, is opposed to a sales tax, preferring to raise taxes that target specific groups and uses.

You can compare the two revenue proposals by clicking on [Senate Bill 6143](#). This link includes further links to both [the amended House version](#) and [the latest Senate version](#).

This has been a long, tough process, and no one wants to wrap it up more than we do, but it's worth the extra few days to make sure the plan we settle on is the one that makes the most sense for our state.

Sincerely,

Sen. Debbie Regala

Email: [regala.debbie@leg.wa.gov](mailto:regala.debbie@leg.wa.gov)

Phone: 360.786.7652

Web: [www.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/senators/regala](http://www.senatedemocrats.wa.gov/senators/regala)

## Public safety bills signed into law



Gov. Chris Gregoire signs SB 6414.

20100331-7128 WASENATE db

Recently I was part of a public safety bill signing at the Lakewood Police Department.

Each of these bills were considered by one of the committees on which I serve and I am pleased to have been able to assist in moving them through the legislative process. The bills represent a concerted effort by the Legislature to maximize community safety through ‘smart on crime’ policies.

I was pleased that two bills I prime sponsored were part of this package.

Two decades ago Washington adopted the first in the nation sex offender registration laws. In 2008 the Sex Offender Policy Board was created to provide the Legislature with recommendations based on research and best practices for any revisions to the registration laws. With 20 years experience behind us, we have a good idea about what works and doesn’t work.

[SB 6414](#), creates uniform timelines for registration by sex offenders. It also clarifies registration requirements for those who committed their crimes out of state. It clearly defines what constitutes failure to register, and the process for requesting relief from registration requirements. The previous inconsistent statutes regarding registration were confusing for both law enforcement and the offender.

I was also proud to see [HB 2466](#) signed into law. I sponsored the Senate version of this bill regarding Ignition Interlock devices which have been shown to be effective in dealing with DUI offenders. The bill requires ignition interlock devices to utilize newer and more reliable technology. It also authorizes the Washington State Patrol to inspect installation of such devices and suspend or revoke the certification of an ignition interlock device and the installation privileges of a provider or installer for noncompliance.

## National health care legislation

If you worry about the health care system in our country, as I do, you are likely pleased with what happened in the other Washington recently. It is worth noting the landmark federal legislation includes a number of cost-control reforms, thanks to Washington's Congressional delegation and input from state legislative leaders and staff.

For one thing, the federal legislation addresses our state's Medicare reimbursement rate inequities (we've historically been paid less for Medicare services than other states. This has been a major concern for providers – often causing them to limit service to Medicare recipients). For another, we'll receive additional funding to cover the expense of high risk pools for people who have pre-existing conditions and no other insurance option.

There are enough benefits to Washington state, in fact, to fill an entire separate e-newsletter. Instead, courtesy of my good colleague Sen. Karen Keiser, chair of the Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee, you can click [here](#) for a list of the most significant ways this historic bill will improve health care here in our own Washington.

Many of the staff in Olympia, are analyzing what will need to be done to coordinate the changes at the state level. There's a lot of work ahead for our state agencies as things move into the implementation phase, and that's why the Senate recently approved [Senate Concurrent Resolution 8409](#) creating a 10-member legislative committee to plan for and oversee implementation. The federal legislation is multi-faceted and complex and will have different implications for different agencies. On such an important issue, I believe it is critical to have some legislative oversight on implementation.

## Question of constitutionality

As I'm sure you are aware, there is some debate about whether our Attorney general should have joined in the lawsuit to block this legislation. Legal scholars across the nation have questioned the merits of the lawsuit. I have recently become aware that the bill did include a provision by Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden that gives any state the option to opt out of the mandate for insurance coverage. Under this provision states would be free to set up their own state plans. States that choose to opt out will be required to apply for a waiver from the Department of Health and Human Services and must meet the baseline criteria for affordability and quality health care. The states will have lots of latitude in how they meet the requirements. The Department has a 180 day window to confirm or deny the waiver.

So, as I understand it, **neither our state nor any other is required to implement** the provision that everyone must purchase at least a basic health insurance plan.